

Rules of the Game

All About Mounts (Part Three)

By Skip Williams



Last week we considered the options you have when you ride a mount in combat. This week, we'll consider just what you can accomplish while your mount carries you along, beginning with **standard actions**.

Standard Actions While Your Mount Moves

Table 8-2 in the *Player's Handbook* and the text accompanying it cover most of the things you can do during combat. Let's consider how being aboard a moving mount affects those actions. The notes here apply whenever you're riding on a moving mount or vehicle and can act.

Most standard actions aren't greatly affected when you're mounted. You simply perform them from your perch on your mount. Sometimes, you can perform the standard action while your mount moves, which can prove pretty darn handy. Other times, your mount's movement interferes with the **action**, especially when you have to be someplace in particular to perform the action. Here's an overview:

Melee Attack: You can make a **melee attack** from your moving mount. If your mount makes a single move, you make your attack either before or after the movement. If your mount makes a double move, you can't make a melee attack unless you're charging. If your mount runs, you can't make a melee attack at all.

As noted in Part One, you use your mount's **space** and your own reach (measured from the part of the space you and your mount share). Also as noted in Part One, you gain a +1 **bonus** (for being on higher ground) if the creature you attack is smaller than your mount and also on foot.

All of the foregoing assumes that your foe is not aboard your mount with you. (In other words, your mount's movement carries you toward or away from your foe, or perhaps both during the course of the move.) If you and your foe have both climbed onto the same mount, you, your mount, and your foe all move together when your mount moves, and melee combat between you and your foe isn't affected.

Ranged Attack: You can make a **ranged attack** from your moving mount. If your mount makes a single move, you make your attack either before or after the movement, and the rules assume your mount is stationary when you shoot. If your mount makes a double move, you can still make a ranged attack, but you're shooting while the mount is moving and you take a -4 **penalty** on your **attack roll**. If your mount runs, you take a -8 penalty on ranged attacks. In either case, you make your attack roll when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Unarmed Attack: As with melee attacks, you can make **unarmed attacks** from your moving mount. If your mount makes a single move, you make your attack either before or after the movement. If your mount makes a double move, you can't make a melee attack unless you're charging. If your mount runs, you can't make a melee attack at all. Most unarmed attacks provoke **attacks of opportunity**.

Activate a Magic Item: Your mount's movement doesn't interfere much with using magic items. If you activate a **spell completion** item (such as a scroll) while your mount is moving, you must make a Concentration **check** just as you would if **casting a spell** (see the section on casting spells).

Otherwise, using and aiming an effect from a magic item while mounted is pretty much like making a ranged attack while mounted (or like making a melee attack, as appropriate for the item).

Aid Another: Helping an ally in melee combat while mounted works just like making a melee attack while mounted. Aiding another with a check while mounted works just like using a skill while mounted.

You can use the aid another action to assist your mount in melee combat (improving either its attack rolls or its **Armor Class** against one opponent). If your mount is not attacking this **round**, you can make an attack roll against AC 10. If your mount is attacking this round, you must first succeed on a **DC 10 Ride check** to attack along with your mount.

Bull Rush: Initiating a bull rush while mounted works just like making a melee attack. You and your mount function as a single creature when resolving the bull rush.

Use your mount's **size** and **Strength** modifier for the opposed Strength check you make to resolve the bull rush.

Cast a Spell: You can **cast a spell** with a casting time of one standard action or less normally if your mount makes a single move. You can cast the spell either before or after your mount moves, and the rules assume your mount is stationary when you cast.

If your mount makes a double move, then you're casting the spell while the mount is moving, and you have to make a Concentration check due to the vigorous motion (DC 10 + spell level) or lose the spell. If the mount is running, your Concentration check is more difficult due to the violent motion (DC 15 + spell level). In either case, you cast your spell when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Your mount's movement has no effect on how you aim most spells. If the spell requires you to make a ranged attack roll, you take penalties if your mount makes more than a single move, as noted in the section on ranged attacks. If the spell requires you to make a melee attack roll, you're subject to the limitations listed in the section on melee attacks.

Concentrate to Maintain an Active Spell: This works just like casting a spell while mounted.

Dismiss a Spell: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to dismiss a spell. If your mount makes a single move, you can dismiss the spell either before or after your mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you dismiss the spell when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Draw a Hidden Weapon: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to draw a hidden weapon. If your mount makes a single move, you can draw the weapon either before or after your mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you draw the weapon when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Drink a Potion or Apply an Oil: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to drink a potion or apply an oil. If your mount makes a single move, you can drink the potion or apply the oil either before or after your mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you drink the potion or apply the oil when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Escape a Grapple: If you and the foe **grappling** you are both aboard the same mount, the mount's movement doesn't affect the grapple. If the foe that is grappling you isn't aboard your mount, your mount cannot move away unless you fall off or escape the grapple first. The time you take escaping the grapple limits your mount to a single move. You can instead try to move your opponent. To do so, you must first win an opposed grapple check. If you succeed, your mount can make a single move, dragging you and your foe along (subject to its carrying capacity).

Feint: Feinting in melee combat is subject to the same limitations that apply to making a melee attack. You must be within melee reach of the foe that is the subject of your feint attempt.

Light a Torch with a Tindertwig: Your mount's movement doesn't affect using a tindertwig. You need both hands to light the torch (one for the torch and one for the tindertwig), and to have both hands free you need to succeed on a DC 5 Ride check to guide your mount with your knees.

Lower Spell Resistance: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to lower **spell resistance**. If your mount makes a single move, you can lower your resistance before or after your mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you lower your resistance when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Make a Dying Friend Stable: Making an ally stable requires using the Heal skill (see the notes on skill use for details).

Overrun: Performing an overrun while mounted works just like making a melee attack. You and your mount function as a single creature when resolving the overrun.

Use your mount's size and Strength modifier for the opposed Strength check you make to resolve the overrun.

Read a Scroll: Reading a scroll while mounted works just like casting a spell while mounted.

Ready: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to ready an action. If your mount makes a single move, you can ready an action before or after the mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you ready your action when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Sunder: Sundering a weapon or another object while mounted works just like making a melee attack while mounted.

Total Defense: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to use the total defense action. If your mount makes a single move, you can begin using total defense before or after the mount moves (it's usually to your benefit to do so before the mount moves). If your mount runs or makes a double move, you begin total defense when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn. (In most cases, it pays to slow down when using total defense).

Turn or Rebuke Undead: Your mount's movement doesn't affect your ability to **turn** or **rebuke undead**. If your mount makes a single move, you turn or rebuke undead before or after the mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you turn or rebuke undead when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Use an Extraordinary Ability: Using an extraordinary ability while mounted works much like using a skill (see next entry).

Use a Skill That Takes One Action: Using a skill that requires you to touch or handle something while mounted (such as Sleight of Hand or Use Rope) is subject to the same limitations that apply to mounted melee attacks. Whatever you touch or handle must be within reach when you use the skill. If you can carry whatever you're touching or handling as part of your skill along with you as your mount moves, your mount's movement doesn't affect the skill use (though the DM might choose to impose a check penalty or DC increase).

A skill that works at a distance (such as Listen or Spot) usually isn't affected by your mount's movement (though the DM might choose to impose a check penalty or DC increase). If your mount makes a single move, you can make your skill check before or after the mount moves. If your mount runs or makes a double move, you use your skill check when your mount has completed half its movement for the turn.

Using a Spell-Like Ability: **Spell-like abilities** require some concentration, and using one while mounted works just like casting a spell while mounted.

Using a Supernatural Ability: **Supernatural abilities** works like making a ranged attack or casting a spell, except that doing so doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity.

What's Next?

That's all the standard actions shown on Table 8-2. Next week, we'll consider **move actions** and **full-round actions** while your mount moves.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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